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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 COLOMBO 001408

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR INR/MR, I/RW, I/REC; PA
SA/INS (CAMP, WALLER), SA/PD (SCHWARTZ, SCENSNY)
SSA/PAS

E.O.12958:N/A

TAGS: [KPAO](#) [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [OIIP](#) [CE](#) [LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA PLAY: U.S. "NOTES WITH CONCERN" LTTE CAMP,
POLITICAL ASSASSINATION

1. On 8/7 Colombo issued a press release reiterating the 8/6 Washington File article, "U.S. Looks Forward to Resumption of Sri Lankan Peace Talks ... State's Reeker says U.S. concerned about rebel activity." The statement said that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) is "undermining confidence in the peace process" and that the USG was "look[ing] forward to a timely resumption of peace talks...."

Headlines

2. The release received immediate and enormous coverage. On 8/7 Sri Lanka's FM stations aired it during their regular headline newscasts, and most TV stations included the story in the noon and evening news shows. On 8/8 and into the weekend the story was front-page news in all English and many vernacular dailies. For example:

- DAILY MIRROR (independent English daily): "U.S. puts pressure on Tigers."
- DAILY NEWS (government-owned English daily): "Raps Tamil Tigers over assassinations: U.S. urges LTTE to resume peace talks."
- DINAMINA (government-owned Sinhala daily): "America accuses: Tigers damage the peace process."
- ISLAND (independent English daily): "U.S. concerned over LTTE camp in Kinniya, killings."
- LAKBIMA (independent Sinhala daily): "Stop political assassinations immediately ... work as per MOU, U.S. orders LTTE."
- LANKADEEPA (independent Sinhala daily): "Tiger activities damaged the peace process ... a strong allegation from America ... strong protest against the tiger camp and assassinations."
- SUNDAY LAKBIMA (independent Sinhala weekender): "Remove Manirasakulam camp, says America."
- SUDAR OLI (pro-LTTE Tamil daily): "America is worried about Tiger camp in Trincomalee District."
- THINAKARAN (government-owned Tamil daily): "Tigers should honor the ceasefire."

Editorial comment

3. Meanwhile editorial quarreled with each other. The English and Sinhala press said that the U.S. had thrown "paper tomahawks" at an LTTE that deserves heavier firepower, while the Tamil press complained that "unwanted foreign" intervention like this "will not help solve the problem amicably." Excerpts follow:

- "Firing paper Tomahawks at terrorists." ISLAND (independent English daily) 8/7:

"... what kind of impact will such statements really have on the LTTE by way of making the outfit desist from violence and compromise its intransigence, which has resulted in all peace processes so far coming a cropper? For a terror group which is still active and raising funds in the U.S. soil despite proscription in that country and continues to hold the peace process to ransom here, such press releases will be nothing more than paper Tomahawks.

"The efforts being made by the U.S. and others fighting shy of applying sufficient pressure on the terrorists to goad them into resuming talks smack of some misplaced thinking that a man eater could be tamed with a cane. This attitude has helped LTTE not only evade the crusade against global terrorism simply by entering a peace process but also achieve what it may not have dreamt of winning through

fighting. Today thanks to the peace process it has its cadres running a parallel administration in the government-held areas under the pretext of doing 'political work'; arms are being brought in with ease; and million of rupees are being raised daily - from the A-9 alone, about Rs. 2 billion is collected annually - for its war chest.

"If the LTTE is to be made to give up terrorism and resume talks as the U.S. wants, it is not exhortation but coercion that is called for. Will the guardians of the peace process rise to the occasion?"

- "Tigers should eliminate stubbornness." SUNDAY LANDADEEPA (independent Sinhala weekender) 8/10:
"Reeker's statement ... is a great eye opener for the Tigers; the U.S. is paying close attention to the LTTE's mulish behavior ... while the terrorists openly violate ... the MOU. The MOU allowed the Tigers to engage in democratic politics in GSL controlled areas by entering these zones unarmed. But the Tigers came armed into these areas, killed their political opponents, abducted government officers, and killed several military persons.... Now comes the Manirasakulam camp. The SLMM said that the camp was a violation of the MOU, but the Tigers just don't care....

"The whole world understands that Tiger behavior does not build confidence. Strangely, only the Tigers fail to realize it.

"If the peace talks are to be concluded successfully, the Tigers must do away with their unruly behavior ... not only in word but in deed. It is the duty of the whole international community -- and not only of the U.S. -- to open the eyes of Tigers....

- "America and Kurangupanchan." SUDAR OLI MAGAZINE (pro-LTTE Tamil weekender) 8/10:

"The Kurangupanchan Camp issue is heating up again.

"LTTE political wing leader S. P. Tamilselvan ... said that the LTTE would not give up the Kurangupanchan Camp because it is situated in forests within the LTTE-controlled area. It was expected that the problem would end there, but now America is poking its nose in it.

"... U.S. State Department spokesman Philip Reeker has raised the issue, saying that LTTE actions regarding the said camp would hinder the peace efforts.

"There is no doubt that many western countries, including America, are eager to get the LTTE back to the peace talks. But these countries fail to understand why the LTTE has temporarily pulled out of talks. They are partial toward the government; they fail to put pressure on the government.

"It is evident that such countries express the views of the government when they make statements regarding Sri Lankan affairs....

"The LTTE has already displayed its displeasure regarding the amount of interest shown by unwanted foreign forces regarding the ethnic problem in Sri Lanka. American intervention will not help solve the problem amicably.

- "Solution possible only if international community ... leaves aside its ulterior motives." SUNDAY VIRAKESARI (Independent Tamil weekly) 8/10:

"The international community should help achieve a respectable permanent solution for the Tamils by bringing the government and the opposition parties together.

"If they intervene in this country's problem with their ulterior motives in mind, it cannot be expected that peace would return.

"The U.S. State Department has said that the actions of the LTTE have allowed to loose faith in the peace efforts.

"LTTE boats were destroyed many times on land and sea. LTTE cadres were attacked. The LTTE was silent over those attacks. They did not want to retaliate.

"Now Tamil political observers want to know whether the U.S. State Department did not know that attacks by the Sri Lankan navy would disturb the peace process?"

"It is evident ... that America is very much concerned about ... the camp in Kurangupanchankulam.
"The LTTE has clearly stated that the camp is situated in an area under their control and would not be removed.

"We are unsure whether the statement of the U.S. State

Department comes as a threat to the LTTE to remove their camp, but issuing statements of this nature ... is not going to bring peace to this country.

"... better to apply pressure on the government and the President to grant the Interim Administrative Council.... The time has come for the international community to leave aside their ulterior motives and work with a clean heart for peace in this country."

Entwistle